

April 13, 2026

*The Honorable Members of the West Virginia Congressional Delegation*  
United States Senate and House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Members of the West Virginia Congressional Delegation,

As state and local leaders, business organizations, and community stakeholders from across West Virginia, we write to urge your strong support for freight rail priorities in the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization. Freight rail has long been a cornerstone of West Virginia's economy, sustaining industrial growth, supporting family-wage jobs, and connecting the state's producers to national and global markets.

West Virginia is one of the most rail-reliant states in the country. Ten different rail operators across our state own, build, maintain, and largely finance their own infrastructure, enabling the extensive rail network that connects coal fields, manufacturing centers, timber operations, energy producers, and chemical facilities to major domestic markets and export terminals along the East Coast and Gulf Coast. For many communities—particularly in rural and mountainous regions—rail remains the most efficient and cost-effective means of transporting bulk commodities and industrial materials that underpin the state's economic foundation.

Beyond its direct economic contributions, freight rail strengthens transportation efficiency across the state by reducing heavy truck traffic on mountain roadways, lowering infrastructure wear on rural highways, and improving supply chain reliability. These benefits help control shipping costs for businesses and ultimately help keep consumer prices more stable for West Virginia families.

As Congress develops the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization, we urge your support for policies that:

**1. Sustain and Strengthen Rail Infrastructure Investment Programs:** Federal programs such as the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) and Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) grants help communities modernize rail corridors and improve safety. In the latest RCE round, the West Virginia Department of Transportation secured three planning grants addressing crossings in Keyser, along the WV-2 corridor in Cabell and Mason Counties, and in Martinsburg. These projects will reduce blocked crossings, improve mobility, and advance long-term safety upgrades in rural communities. Continued strong funding for CRISI and RCE will propel critical safety and efficiency improvements statewide.

**2. Support Performance-Based Rail Policy:** Rail safety and workforce stability are shared priorities across West Virginia's industries and labor communities. Freight railroads

operate under comprehensive federal oversight while investing billions annually in infrastructure, equipment, and advanced safety technologies. This sustained private investment has made rail the safest way to move freight over land, with safety performance steadily improving over time. Federal policy should emphasize data-driven, performance-based standards that protect rail workers while ensuring the freight network remains efficient and competitive for the industries that depend on it.

**3. Encourage Innovation and Continued Private Investment:** Freight railroads invest billions annually in track maintenance, equipment modernization, and advanced safety technologies. Regulations that support innovation—including automated inspection systems, advanced monitoring technologies, and predictive maintenance tools—will help strengthen safety performance while ensuring long-term reliability across the rail network.

From the historic rail lines that helped build West Virginia’s industrial economy to the modern freight corridors that continue to power today’s energy, manufacturing, and resource sectors, rail transportation remains central to the state’s economic future.

We thank you for your leadership and respectfully urge your continued support for policies that strengthen freight rail infrastructure, promote balanced regulatory approaches, and ensure that West Virginia’s rail network continues to support the state’s workers, businesses, and families.

Sincerely,

Michael Adams  
City Manager  
City of Weirton

R. Stephen Catlett  
Vice President  
Berkeley County Commission

Bill Archer  
President  
Mercer County Commission

Geno Chiarelli  
Delegate, District 78  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Bill Bell  
Delegate, District 8  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Micheal George  
Mayor  
City of Charles Town

James Boggs  
County Administrator  
Wayne County Commission

Dean Harris  
Mayor  
City of Weirton

Dave Casebolt  
Mayor  
City of Nitro

Nate Hartman  
City Councilor  
City of Charles Town

Scot Heckert  
Delegate, District 13  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Rick Hillenbrand  
Delegate, District 88  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Josh Holstein  
Delegate, District 32  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Gary Howell  
Delegate, District 87  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Tresa Howell  
Delegate, District 52  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Scott James  
Mayor  
City of St. Albans

Kevin Knowles  
Mayor  
City of Martinsburg

Chuck Mankins  
Sheriff  
Pleasants County

Ronnie Martin  
Mayor  
City of Bluefield

Jordan Maynor  
Delegate, District 41  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Robbie Morris  
Senator, District 11

West Virginia Senate  
Greg Puckett  
Commissioner  
Mercer County Commission

Agnes Queen  
Commissioner  
Lewis County Commission

Matthew Rohrbach  
Delegate, District 17  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Tia Rumbaugh  
City Councilor  
City of Huntington

Andy Shamblin  
Delegate, District 59  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Charles Sheedy  
Delegate, District 7  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Joe Statler  
Delegate, District 97  
West Virginia House of Delegates

Bobby Stewart  
Commissioner  
Lewis County Commission

Tom Willis  
Senator, District 15  
West Virginia Senate

Rod Wyman  
President  
Lewis County Commission